

Military Leadership Education:
What War College Journals Seem To Suggest

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Abstract

The new, complex taxonomy of leader behavior suggested by Yukl is used to examine the content of the journals of the War Colleges of the Air Force, Army, and Navy. There are several purposes for such a content analysis. First, if these journals reflect the educational content of the War Colleges, this analysis would reflect that. Second, two time frames are used to examine changes between a period of "war" (1966-1970) and a period of "peace" (1977-1982). Third, these data could form the basis for discussion of numerous points: Is the education relevant for the current time? Is the education relevant for the time when most of "students" would need it? Do the journals reflect the educational content of the War Colleges? And so on.

Introduction

Leadership in general and military leadership in particular have been studied for some time (Bass, 1981; Yukl, 1981). Episodes during the Vietnam conflict (Gabriel and Savage, 1978) and efforts to prepare for futuristic battlefields (Hunt and Blair, forthcoming) have led to recent intensifications of interest in military leadership. Hopefully, however, this new round of research will not repeat the problems of the past, but rather will build upon the successes of previous work to provide a clearer understanding of military leadership for the future.

Specifically, the level of analysis in emerging research must be intermediate. The highly generalizable, but not very useful, task- and maintenance-oriented dichotomy is at too high a level of abstraction to be of much practical significance and more research based on such a dichotomy will not extend our knowledge very much. If one or more subcomponents of one or both of those broad categories is vital while another is not, research using such dichotomies will likely fail to uncover that vital component. On the other hand, the use of highly specific job and position analyses based on detailed behavior or competencies may also not be so useful. Those analyses are conducted for particular positions at particular organizational levels in particular organizations at particular points in time. As such, they may be

quite useful for specific, short-term job training, but not be so useful for more general leadership education. They cannot be generalized very well. Intermediate level analysis is needed.

Intermediate level analysis would be much more detailed, involve many more dimensions than higher level analysis, but those dimensions would be generalizable across a moderately wide range of circumstances. A new taxonomy of leader behavior has been developed for just such analysis (Yukl, 1982). For more than six years, careful, systematic research has been conducted and has led to the development of this new taxonomy. The taxonomy appears broad enough to capture most relevant leader behaviors and yet is quite useful in specific applications as well.

In other research, this new taxonomy has been demonstrated to be both applicable to and useful in research on military leader effectiveness (Yukl and Van Fleet, 1982). That research involved using the taxonomy with both critical incident and questionnaire-correlational methodologies. Another obvious application of the new taxonomy would be in content analysis research. A variety of specific steps might be employed in content analysis, but fundamentally the content of something is examined to see to what extent that content can be represented or described by the categories in the taxonomy. That "something" could be interview protocols, diaries, reports of observers, or other written material such as books and journals.

Purpose

The purposes of this paper are (1) to demonstrate that the new taxonomy can be used in content analysis research and (2) to determine what can be learned from such an analysis on material written about military leadership and used in the education of military officers.

Method

On the assumption that the journals of the several War Colleges reflect, at least in part, the content of the education provided by those War Colleges, those journals were selected for study. Thus, three journals were content analyzed--the Air University Review (AUR), the Military Review (MR), and the Naval War College Review (NWCR). To determine if that content has changed over time, two particular five-year time periods were selected--one of relatively low conflict, 1977-1982, which will be termed a "peace" period and one of higher conflict, 1966-1970, which will be termed a "war" period. Five-year time periods were used to "smooth" short-term fluctuations in content.

For each of these five-year time periods, a graduate student familiar with the definitions used in the taxonomy performed the analysis on all articles with management or leadership (or related terms) in the title or abstract. These were done for each such article in each issue of each journal for the two five-year time periods. As this procedure is extremely time consuming, multiple analysts were not used. However, the accuracy of the procedure was checked by having the judgment of one of these analysts verified by having a group of six other graduate students content analyze various issues of the 1982 Military Review. The +0.81 correlation obtained suggested that researchers familiar with the taxonomy can perform consistent analyses of journal content using that taxonomy. The specific analysis involved the

student reading each article and making a tic mark next to a category from the taxonomy every time he or she read something which dealt with the content of that category.

Results

The results of this content analysis may be viewed in either of two ways--across time or across the journals. The former approach would suggest either "war" or "peace" differences or at least developmental differences over time. The latter approach would suggest differences across service branches or perhaps across editorial review boards. Each of these is examined below based on the data shown in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 About Here

Before looking to those differences, however, a comment is in order about one striking piece of information in this figure--the average number of tallies per issue. In each time period the number of tallies for the Military Review is greater than for the other two journals and for the peacetime period it is phenomenally greater! No simple reason is evident for the wartime difference, but for the peacetime difference one does exist. The Military Review ran a special issue on leadership during this time period. That issue itself was a source of many of the added tallies, and it also generated other articles, letters, etc. which increased the tally count for that journal. This wide discrepancy in tallies is one reason why the data in the figure are in percentage terms. But just what do those data suggest?

For the Military Review, only two of the 23 categories are significantly different across the two time periods. Consideration and Facilitating Cooperation and Teamwork are both greater in times of relative peace than in time of war. For the Air University Review, seven categories are significantly different. Clarifying Work Roles is less frequent in peace while the other six are all greater. Those six are: Goal Setting, Emphasizing Performance, Training-Coaching, Problem Solving, Disseminating Information, and Criticizing. For the Naval War College Review, 12 of the 23 categories are significantly different. Five were greater in peacetime (Inspiring Subordinates, Problem Solving, Showing Consideration, Monitoring Operations, and Delegating), while seven were greater in wartime (Managing Conflict, Administering Discipline, Clarifying Work Roles, Planning, Goal Setting, Training-Coaching, and Disseminating Information).

A closer look at these indicates that in no case was a single category significantly different for each of the three journals. In only six cases was a significant difference obtained for two of the three journals for a single category, and the direction of difference was alike in only half of those! Do these differences reflect genuine differences among the branches of the service in terms of their missions and the leader behaviors necessary to accomplish those different missions? Or are they reflecting differences in philosophy which may or may not actually be related to leader effectiveness? Or are they merely random or something else? Further, are these differences what one would predict based on leadership theory? Certainly the Showing

Consideration and Clarifying Work Roles differences are in the direction which one might expect based on theory, but Problem Solving seems reversed. Since other differences vary across the journals, there is little to be gained from further speculation at this time. More research will be necessary before we can reasonably begin to fully discuss this differences, but this is a crucial area in need of further and careful research.

A look across journals reflects a similar pattern. The Military Review is different from the others in only two instances--the peacetime frequencies are different for Problem Solving (lower) and Facilitating Cooperation and Teamwork (higher). Air University Review has four instances of differences, again all peacetime and again some greater (Goal Setting, Disseminating Information, and Criticizing) and one less (Showing Consideration). Finally, the Naval War College Review has eight different instances and some are for wartime while others are for peacetime. All of the wartime differences (Managing Conflict, Administering Discipline, Clarifying Work Roles, and Disseminating Information) and three of the four peacetime (Monitoring the Environment, Monitoring Operations, and Delegating) are greater. Only the one remaining peacetime difference (Training-Coaching) is less than that of the other journals. Again one wonders why these differences exist, and again there is no ready answer.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this paper was to demonstrate that Yukl's new taxonomy of leader behavior could be effectively utilized in content analysis research, specifically for content analyzing journal articles. That purpose has been clearly accomplished. A second purpose, however, was to determine what can be learned from such an analysis. We have learned that there are war versus peace differences and differences among the services. We have not learned, however, anything about why such differences exist.

References

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Figure 1

Content Analysis of Selected Military Journals
(Percentage Frequencies Rounded to Nearest Hundreth)

Behavior Categories	War Years (1966-1970)				Peace Years (1977-1982)			
	Air		Naval		Air		Naval	
	Military Review	University Review	War College Review	Military Review	University Review	War College Review		
Managing Conflict	.02	.03	.08 a,b,c	.03	.02	.00	b	
Administering Discipline	.02	.02	.09 a,b,c	.03	.00	.00	b	
Planning	.07 a	.05	.06 b	.04	.00	.00	b	
Goal Setting	.04	.05 b	.08 a,b	.05	.15 a,b,c	.02	b	
Clarifying Work Roles	.07 a	.08 a,b	.12 a,b,c	.03	.02 b	.00	b	
Inspiring Subordinates	.06 a	.07 a	.03 b	.09 a	.05	.10 a,b		
Emphasizing Performance	.08 a	.08 a,b	.06	.09 a	.03 b	.07 a		
Training-Coaching	.06 a	.03 b	.10 a,b	.07 a	.08 a,b	.03 b,c		
Showing Consideration	.04 b	.05	.05 b	.11 a,b	.07 a, c	.17 a,b		
Problem Solving	.03	.03 b	.01 b	.02 c	.09 a,b	.10 a,b		
Disseminating Information	.04	.03 b	.11 a,b,c	.04	.10 a,b,c	.05 b		
Delegating	.03	.03	.03 b	.02	.00	.10 a,b,c		
Encouraging Decision Participation	.03	.03	.03	.05	.07 a	.05		
Criticizing	.03	.01 b	.03	.05	.19 a,b,c	.00		
Facilitating Cooperation and Teamwork	.04 b	.04	.00	.08 a,b,c	.01	.00		
Monitoring Operations	.02	.03	.00 b	.04	.01	.17 a,b,c		
Providing Praise and Recognition	.04	.06 a	.05	.02	.01	.03		
Career Counseling	.02	.05	.01	.03	.01	.00		
Structuring Reward Contingencies	.04	.06 a	.01	.04	.00	.00		
Facilitating the Work	.04	.03	.03	.03	.03	.03		
Innovating	.04	.03	.00	.02	.03	.03		
Representing the Unit	.02	.03	.00	.03	.00	.00		
Average Number of Tallies per Issue	3.76	1.98	2.16	14.98	1.43	2.00		

a = highest frequencies

b = war/peace significantly different ($p < .05$)

c = proportion significantly different from each of the other two journals ($p < .05$)

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